

History of the Grand River Valley Philatelic Association (GRVPA)

We used to sing the song “The more we get together.” The first line was repeated three times and we ended with the last one: “The happier we will be.” Collectors who belong to clubs in the GRVPA in southwest Ontario have enjoyed getting together for many years. Their members often attend meetings and shows of other clubs. Some collectors even belong to more than one club. Their goal is not just to look for stamps or covers, view exhibits and learn or share more knowledge about stamp collecting, but also to meet other collectors. Indeed, many members who have stopped collecting stamps due to age or other reasons still enjoy the opportunity to meet familiar people. Some also attend executive meetings of the executive of the Grand. Aside from participating in the discussion of agenda items, most representatives of area clubs appreciate the opportunity to meet colleagues from other clubs.

Beginnings.

On October 21, 1944, representatives of three stamp clubs met at the Old Mill in Kitchener to form the Grand River Valley Philatelic Association. The first clubs to join were Kitchener, Galt (now a part of Cambridge), and Brantford. Guelph joined the GRVPA later that year.

The executives of the first GRVPA were: President, C.M. Bryans of Galt; 2nd Vice-president, Asher Borth; Publicity manager, Mrs. Skelton; Member-at-large, William Erbach. This information is contained in the book *The Quiet Hobby: A History of Organized Philately in the Grand River Valley, 1895-1985*, by Kathryn Hansuld Lamb, published in 1985.

In the years before and after the formation of the GRVPA clubs organized car pools to help members attend meetings of other area clubs. There were frequent joint meetings. Car-pooling was especially important in the late 1930s and during World War II, when people either couldn't afford cars or gasoline, or gasoline was rationed. There were also no television sets or computers to keep people occupied at home. For many people, friends, activities and expenditures revolved around stamps and stamp clubs. Club members even went out for dinner together! There were 90 at the get-together and dinner in Guelph on April 1, 1950. In 1957, an annual GRVPA dinner was started at Fern Lodge in Galt. The GRVPA has held at least three shows with exhibits and bourse, GRANDPEX in April 1967 in Kitchener, GRANDPEX 1979 in Cambridge, and GRANDPEX 2002 in Guelph.

After the formation of the GRVPA, the various clubs competed for awards for attendance at GRVPA meetings. Grand meetings were held each month during winter months. Local meetings were often cancelled because they coincided with a Grand meeting at another club.

Local stamp clubs were in existence long before the GRVPA was formed in 1944. As early as 1899 there was a Berlin Stamp Club, which was club #2 of the Dominion Philatelic Association. Berlin and Waterloo philatelists formed the Twin City Philatelic Association in 1900. So there were philatelists who belonged to clubs in the Kitchener-Waterloo area long before 1935, when the Kitchener Stamp Collector's Club was organized. This club changed its name to the Grand River Valley Stamp Club in 1936 and held at least four shows under that name, the fourth at the YMCA in Kitchener on May 11, 1940. The name was changed to its present form, the Kitchener-Waterloo Philatelic Society, in 1953. This information is contained in the booklet *The Quiet Hobby*, already mentioned. Hamilton formed a club in 1932 and Brantford in 1938.

The logo of the GRVPA was designed in 1975 by Bob Meek of the Brantford Stamp Club, a longtime member and dealer. In the original design, the 11 arms of the diamond represented the eleven member chapters in 1975. The arms all terminate at the apex, representing the joining together of the clubs, with the initials “GRVPA” inter-woven. The number of arms (represented by lines) has been changed to represent chapters joining the organization between 1975 and 2011.



Current scope of activities of the GRVPA

As of mid-November 2011, there were 15 chapters or clubs in the GRVPA. These were: Bramalea, Brantford, Burlington, Cambridge, Guelph, Hamilton, Kincardine, Milton, Oakville, St. Catharines, Saugeen and Stratford Stamp Clubs, the Oxford Philatelic Society, the Kitchener-Waterloo Philatelic Society and the Kitchener Waterloo Cambridge Regional Post Card Club. Since that time the Milton club has ceased operating.

The GRVPA continues to publish *The Grand News* five times a year. The periodical first appeared, ten times a year, in 1969 under the Editorship of Peter Mann. The *Grand News* has won awards for its excellence as a philatelic news magazine. Among the other services provided today by the GRVPA is the annual "Grand Night" at a volunteer club, with a guest speaker and Sales Circuit books from several clubs. Since 1995, it has also held an annual Club Fair, featuring a silent auction and Sales Circuit books from member clubs.

Most member clubs sponsor a show annually, many featuring exhibits and all featuring dealers. Over 60 dealers provide philatelic materials and advice to collectors. Youth Stampex, while active, was present at many club shows and provided children with free stamps and assistance with stamp collecting. Member clubs have taken over this responsibility.

The GRVPA holds meetings of its executive approximately five times a year. The executive consists of one or two representatives from each member club who elect the officers of the association. It deals with concerns of local clubs, insurance coverage, Grand meetings and Grand Club shows, as well as other matters affecting philately in general. The GRVPA continues to assist clubs with regular meetings by providing lists of available speakers and helping with show exhibits by listing and sharing display frames and easels.

In 1986 the GRVPA began to award the Howard Bryce Memorial Trophy to club members for major contributions to philately during any time period. Howard Bryce was very active in the Kitchener club as an officer and dealer, and as a dealer at GRVPA events. In 2001 the association began to offer the GRVPA Memorial Trophy to a member for contributions to philately in the previous year.

National Affiliations

The GRVPA is one of the many member clubs and affiliates of The Royal Philatelic Society of Canada (RPSC). GRVPA clubs which are also members of the RPSC receive its bi-monthly magazine, *The Canadian Philatelist*, and are covered through the national organization's liability insurance plan.

Various clubs, and the GRVPA itself, have hosted annual shows and conventions – now called Royal-Royale - of the RPSC. In 1945, the Kitchener club hosted the convention of the RPSC's predecessor, the Canadian Philatelic Society (CPS), on the occasion of the Kitchener club's 10th anniversary. In 1948, the Brantford club hosted the CPS convention. The Canadian Philatelic Society became The Royal Philatelic Society in 1959. The Kitchener-Waterloo Philatelic Society hosted the RPSC in 1960, as did the Hamilton club in 1966. The GRVPA itself welcomed the RPSC at GRANDPEX 1979, held in Cambridge. Other RPSC conventions and shows were hosted by the Hamilton club (1989 and 1998), the Saugeen club (in Hanover, 2003) and the St. Catharines club (2009).

Throughout the years, many GRVPA club members have served on the board of the RPSC and its predecessor, the CPS. Edward Goodale of Hamilton and Bert Baulch of Brantford served as presidents of the CPS and Bert Baulch and Jim Kraemer of Kitchener served as presidents of the RPSC. The current president, George Pepall, and treasurer, David Oberholtzer are both members of the Kitchener-Waterloo club. Rodney Paige of the St. Catharines club and Kenneth Magee of the Stratford club are currently directors of the RPSC. The current editor of *The Canadian Philatelist* is Tony Shaman, also a member of the Kitchener-Waterloo club.

Written by George Speers, December, 2011.

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